

The following claims are presented for examination:

**1. - 38.** (Canceled)

**39.** (New) An apparatus comprising:

pseudo skin; and

a palpation module for enabling a user to palpate a pseudo vein, wherein:

- (a) the palpation module comprises the pseudo vein;
- (b) the palpation module is disposed beneath the pseudo skin;
- (c) the palpation module generates a magnetic force that opposes downward motion of the pseudo vein; and
- (d) when the user applies a sufficient amount of force to the pseudo vein, the pseudo vein cannot be felt.

**40.** (New) The apparatus of claim 39 wherein the pseudo vein yields to applied occlusion pressure, such that it moves downward, wherein downward movement is used as an indicator that an occlusion technique has been performed.

**41.** (New) The apparatus of claim 39 further comprising a skin-stretch module, wherein the skin-stretch module is disposed beneath the pseudo skin, and wherein the skin-stretch module measures an amount by which the user stretches the pseudo skin.

**42.** (New) An apparatus comprising:

pseudo skin; and

a palpation module for enabling a user to palpate a pseudo vein, wherein:

- (a) said palpation module is disposed beneath said pseudo skin;
- (b) said palpation module generates a force that opposes downward motion of said pseudo vein; and
- (c) a magnitude of said force is substantially constant during application of said force.

**43.** (New) The apparatus of claim 42 wherein said magnitude of said force can be varied, but is constant during application.

**44.** (New) The apparatus of claim 42 wherein said force is a magnetic force.

**45.** (New) The apparatus of claim 44 wherein at a minimum magnitude, said magnetic force is slightly greater than the gravitational force.

**46.** (New) The apparatus of claim 44 wherein said magnetic force is generated by an interaction of a magnetic field that is generated by an energized coil with a magnetic field that is generated by a permanent magnet.

**47.** (New) An apparatus comprising a palpation module, wherein said palpation module comprises:

- a pseudo vein;

- a first plate, wherein the pseudo vein is disposed on the first plate, and wherein the first plate is movable toward a second plate;

- the second plate, wherein the second plate is disposed above said first plate in a fixed position, and wherein said second plate has an opening that is dimensioned and located to receive the pseudo vein; and

- an arrangement for generating a magnetic force, wherein:

- (a) the arrangement is operatively coupled to the second plate; and

- (b) the magnetic force opposes a force that is applied to the pseudo vein by a user.

**48.** (New) The apparatus of claim 47 wherein the palpation module is operable to perform at least one of following operations: measure a change in position of the pseudo vein and vary a simulated stiffness of the pseudo vein.

**49.** (New) The apparatus of claim 47 wherein said pseudo vein comprises a rigid member.

**50.** (New) The apparatus of claim 47 wherein a magnitude of the magnetic force is adjustable.

**51.** (New) The apparatus of claim 47 further comprising a sensor, wherein the sensor generates a signal that is indicative of a distance between the first plate and the second plate.

**52.** (New) An apparatus comprising:

- a rigid housing;
- a first opening and a second opening in the housing; and
- a palpation module for enabling a user to palpate a pseudo vein, wherein the palpation module:
  - (a) comprises a rigid pseudo vein;
  - (b) is disposed within the housing beneath the first opening;
  - (c) generates a magnetic force that opposes downward motion of the pseudo vein;
  - (d) is operable to vary a simulated stiffness of the rigid pseudo vein.

**53.** (New) The apparatus of claim 52 further comprising pseudo skin, wherein said pseudo skin is disposed above said palpation module.

**54.** (New) The apparatus of claim 53 further comprising a skin-stretch module, wherein the skin-stretch module is disposed within said housing beneath the pseudo skin and beneath the second opening, and wherein the skin-stretch module measures an amount by which the user stretches the pseudo skin during a skin-stretch technique.

**55.** (New) The apparatus of claim 52 further comprising a needle/catheter module, wherein a portion of the needle/catheter module is inserted into the housing during a simulated vascular-access procedure.

**56.** (New) The apparatus of claim 52 further comprising an electronics/communications interface, wherein the electronics/communications interface is disposed within the housing, and wherein the electronics/communications interface electrically couples the palpation module to a data processing system.

**57.** (New) An apparatus comprising:

pseudo skin; and

a palpation module for enabling a user to palpate a pseudo vein, wherein said palpation module:

(a) is disposed beneath said pseudo skin;

(b) comprises a rigid pseudo vein that moves downward in response to applied pressure by the user; and

(c) is operable to vary a simulated stiffness of the rigid pseudo vein.

**58.** (New) The apparatus of claim 57 wherein when the user applies a sufficient amount of force to the pseudo vein, the pseudo vein cannot be felt.

**59.** (New) The apparatus of claim 57 wherein the palpation module controllably obscures said pseudo vein under said pseudo skin such that said pseudo vein can be felt, or not felt, as desired.

**60.** (New) The apparatus of claim 57 wherein the palpation module generates a magnetic force that opposes downward motion of the pseudo vein, and further wherein a magnitude of the force is substantially constant during application thereof.

**61.** (New) An apparatus comprising:

pseudo skin; and

a palpation module for enabling a user to palpate a pseudo vein, wherein said palpation module:

(a) is disposed beneath the pseudo skin;

(b) comprises a pseudo vein that moves downward in response to applied pressure;

(c) generates a force that opposes downward motion of the pseudo vein; and

(d) the palpation module controllably obscures the pseudo vein under the pseudo skin such that the pseudo vein can be felt, or not felt, as desired.

**62.** (New) The apparatus of claim 61 wherein when the user applies a sufficient amount of force to the pseudo vein, the pseudo vein cannot be felt.

**63.** (New) The apparatus of claim 61 wherein the pseudo vein is rigid.

**64.** (New) The apparatus of claim 63 wherein the palpation module is operable to vary a simulated stiffness of the pseudo vein.

**65.** (New) The apparatus of claim 61 wherein the force generated by the palpation module is experienced by the user as a substantially constant force opposing downward movement of the pseudo vein.

**66.** (New) The apparatus of claim 61 wherein the force generated by the palpation module is adjustable, but is substantially constant during application to oppose downward movement of the pseudo vein.

**67.** (New) The apparatus of claim 61 wherein the force is a magnetic force.

**68.** (New) The apparatus of claim 67 wherein the magnetic force is generated by an interaction of a magnetic field that is generated by an energized coil with a magnetic field that is generated by a permanent magnet.

**69.** (New) The apparatus of claim 67 wherein a simulated stiffness of the pseudo vein is varied by changing a magnitude of the magnetic force.

**70.** (New) The apparatus of claim 67 wherein the pseudo vein is rigid, and further wherein a simulated stiffness of the rigid pseudo vein is varied by changing a magnitude of the magnetic force.